

New Hampshire Rail Transit Authority

Chair: Peter Burling

Vice Chair: Katherine Hersh

Agenda

December 17, 2010

10:00 am

LOB 201

Present: Chair Peter Burling, Vice-Chair Kathy Hersh, Kerrie Diers, David Preece, Ray Gagnon, Mike Izbicki, Bill Lipfert, Thomas Mahon, Jay Minkarah, Kit Morgan, Tim Moore, Steve Pesci, Mike Tardiff, Malcolm Taylor, Bruce Woodruff

I. Call to Order

II. Public Input – *Members of the public wishing to will be given an opportunity to address the NHRTA Board.*

Alderman Barbara Pressly read a resolution passed by the Board of Aldermen City of Nashua in support of passenger and freight rail: *“Resolved by the Board of Aldermen of the City of Nashua that the Board of Aldermen and Mayor support passenger and freight rail service in the state, and encourages the state to put it on the top of the 10-year transportation improvement plan and to accept all available funding.”*

Alderman Pressly asked that other cities and towns undertake a similar effort. She suggested that groups of businesses and chambers also pass resolutions to prove that a majority of people in NH support rail. Peter Burling thanked Alderman Pressly for her efforts and thought that this is a great idea. Alderman Pressly recommended that we make copies of the resolution for distribution.

III. Minutes

a. *Minutes of November 19, 2010*

Mike Izbicki made a motion to approve the minutes, seconded by David Preece. The motion was approved unanimously.

IV. Long Range Transportation Plan - *Response to question from member of the public at the last meeting.*

Mike Pillsbury was present to update the Board on this issue. A few years ago, there was a Citizens Advisory Committee effort to provide input to the DOT regarding the Long Range Transportation Plan. This effort looked at the issues more globally with a wider focus than transportation planning. Mike Pillsbury stated that he would like to see the Tuck School participate in the rail plan and would like to coordinate to see how the graduate student project work can fit into this latest plan. Malcolm Taylor stated that he has a copy of “Revitalizing the Railroad: A feasibility analysis of Potential Demand for the White River Junction, VT to Concord, NH Rail Corridor”.

Peter Burling asked if the NHRTA could have a filing cabinet in DOT to keep our official records. Mike said that the NHRTA could have one in either Kit Morgan's Bureau or in the Front Office. We can collect these documents and provide them to Kit for filing. Kathy said we should also make every effort to make all info available on the website so that people would not have to go to DOT to do research.

V. NH Capitol Corridor Updates

- a. Schedule – Kit Morgan distributed draft schedule for FRA and FTA grants. The idea is that both grants would be combined into a single RFP and ideally, they would be both in the same contract. The funding sources would be tracked separately. Is there a scope of work to review? Kit stated that there is a scope and Kathy offered to distribute.

Kathy asked if there is any way that we can accelerate this schedule? The schedule could possibly be moved up, but there is a NH DOT process that must go through and this takes time. The schedule is a work in progress and will be revised. The idea of keeping these projects together and the process is based on this schedule.

Peter Burling asked Mike Pillsbury and Kit to look at whether there are other ways that we can configure this schedule to accelerate the FTA planning process? Mike and Kit said they would review it.

- b. Match – Steve Pesci and the subcommittee met regarding the match. Steve reported that the seacoast communities are working to come up with a standard accounting for the funds that have been spent on the rail project. Not all costs will be eligible, but it is important that we do this in a consistent way. This exercise is valuable even if we cannot use it on the NH Capitol Corridor project, then we potentially can use as match on the Boston corridor.

By next month, will have the data collected and standardized. Kit has reached out to FRA to determine which costs would be eligible. We need to provide \$560,000 in match. We should be looking at the widest net possible to raise the match. We could organize to raise awareness and for ideas. Bruce Woodruff suggested that local communities look at the transportation local option fee to dedicate match to planning grant – and then later to support operating costs. Jay MInkara expressed concerns about using the private fund raising approach. We need to have a commitment from the State of NH in support of this project. From perspective of a private donor, they would be looking to the State to see what level of commitment is there. We may be too late at this point for towns that are already entering hearings on budget season.

Kathy Hersh asked if the capital funds in state budget are still available. Mike Pillsbury stated that a footnote on the funding indicates that local match must be raised first before state match funds would be used. This footnote needs to be changed legislatively. This is still a possibility. FRA suggested that FTA funds be used first so that we would know what the focus of the FRA funds will be. Do we need to find a legislator to introduce a bill to have that legislative footnote eliminated and the funds repurposed? This would show state commitment to this project. Mike Pillsbury stated that they are already in HB25 capital budget to be extended, so this could be dealt with through the current legislative process.

We need to start meeting with legislators and working with communities to support the project. There is a meeting on January 12 in Bedford and the City of Nashua Mayor is meeting with state legislative delegation in January. Jay MInkara stated that the capital budget process might be the way to go. We should consult with Representative Bouchard

that this is the correct direction to go. When we do this, we should do this in the broadest possible way. Peter Burling will consult with David Hiltz on what is the best approach.

Steve Pesci said that he did a rough allocation of funds disbursed for federal funds and approximately \$411 million sent to NE states. NH received 1% of those funds. ME and VT received additional funds. He does not believe that the last election was a mandate against rail. It wasn't even an issue. We need to share articles about rail that are published around the state. There was a Nashua Telegraph article this week that was not favorable. Kerrie Diers will send the UNH survey that was completed in 2007 regarding the general sentiment toward rail to Steve Pesci. Steve will follow up with this at UNH to see what it would take to get questions added to the upcoming UNH polls.

Kathy Hersh suggested that the BIA has priorities for investing in transportation. Peter Burling will follow up on this. Tom Irwin suggested that it is important for BIA to understand how NH is being isolated. This is an important part of the message.

Mike Izbicki suggested we frame the question to be "What will happen if we don't get rail to NH? What is NH going to lose economically?"

One suggestion was made from the public: Mark Richardson and business interest group might be helpful to testify against the bill to eliminate NHRTA.

We should develop a marketing piece/ handout that includes the map of funded rail corridors, Steve Pesci's analysis and the one page description. Bill Lipfert suggested that we include success stories from other places and show what the economic impact is on jobs, economy, and ridership. The Downeaster is a great example. Mike Izbicki and Bill Lipfert will put together some text and Kerrie's staff will format it to use as an educational/marketing piece.

NHAARP will be critical to assisting in getting message out. We should concentrate on getting message to communities and towns. The resolution that Nashua passed yesterday is the first critical step in this. The key message is that we need to keep the NHRTA in operation until we have the answers and need to have the footnote eliminated.

Action items:

- Kerrie will pdf copy of Tuck School report and send to Kathy for posting on the website.
- Kathy to distribute scope of work from Kit Morgan for NH Capitol Corridor Study
- Notify each other regarding speaking opportunities
- Contact municipalities regarding the resolution (emphasis on central corridor)
- Reach out to organizations such as BIA
- Let Mike Izbicki and Peter Burling know about speaking opportunities
- Steve Pesci will look into a poll from UNH
- Follow up regarding HB 25 process amendment – Peter and Mike Pillsbury
- Marketing piece, success stories – Mike Izbicki and Bill Lipfert
- Tim Moore suggested we contact the new bureau of tourism director to see if she has examples of rail support – Peter will follow up on this
- Peter asked Kit to put together a list of NH agencies that are related to rail – are there other organizations in the state that we should be coordinating with?
- Nashua has stepped up to the plate – how can we get Manchester to step up to the plate? Alderman Pressly volunteered to take on the action item to contact Merrimack, Manchester, Bedford
- Mike Tardiff will contact the Concord Mayor and Bow Town Administrator

- Mike Izbicki will contact Bedford
- Jay Minkarah and David Preece will contact Manchester
- Tom Mahon will contact Merrimack

Peter thanked Kit and Michael for all of their efforts and work.

VI. Other Discussion

- a. State Rail Plan – see above
- b. Enfield Bridge Project – resolution tabled
- c. Other -
 - **Kathy Hersh made a motion to accept and place on file the letter from Renaissance Downtowns dated December 7, 2010, seconded by Peter Burling. The motion passed unanimously.**
 - Barbara MacElroy – Tuck school is proposing a first year project to update northern rail study. It would be a team of 5 students plus a team of professionals. The rail plan update might be a good opportunity. Charles White from the Upper Valley might be taking the lead working with this team. We need to get a statement out by early January for students. Is there any data gathering that would be helpful for the rail plan update? Is there part of the scope that students could work on? She will follow up with Mike Pillsbury on this project.
 - Peter Burling met with group in Lebanon working on rail/trail issues.
 - The Town of Plaistow presented the project to CMAQ committee last Friday. Was good presentation. There is approximately \$18 million to disburse and \$22 million in requests, so that is promising.
 - Steve Pesci noted that last month he reported that CNJ dropped the bus line connection to the Downeaster and is happy to report this month that Falcon Bus stepped up to the plate to do a combined ticket and interlinked transit system.

VII. Non-public session – None

VIII. Adjourn – David Preece made a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Mike Izbicki. All in favor. Meeting adjourned at 11:50. Next meeting: January 28, 2010

Respectfully submitted,

Kerrie Diers
NHRTA Secretary